

SCHENECTADY'S  
NONAGENARIAN  
INDUSTRY

1848 ~ 1938



JOSEPH A. SMITH  
R. D. 1, Box 23M  
Sherman Hills  
Melrose, New York 12121

Jōseph A. Smith  
2320-17th Street  
Troy, N. Y.

*American  
Locomotive  
Company*





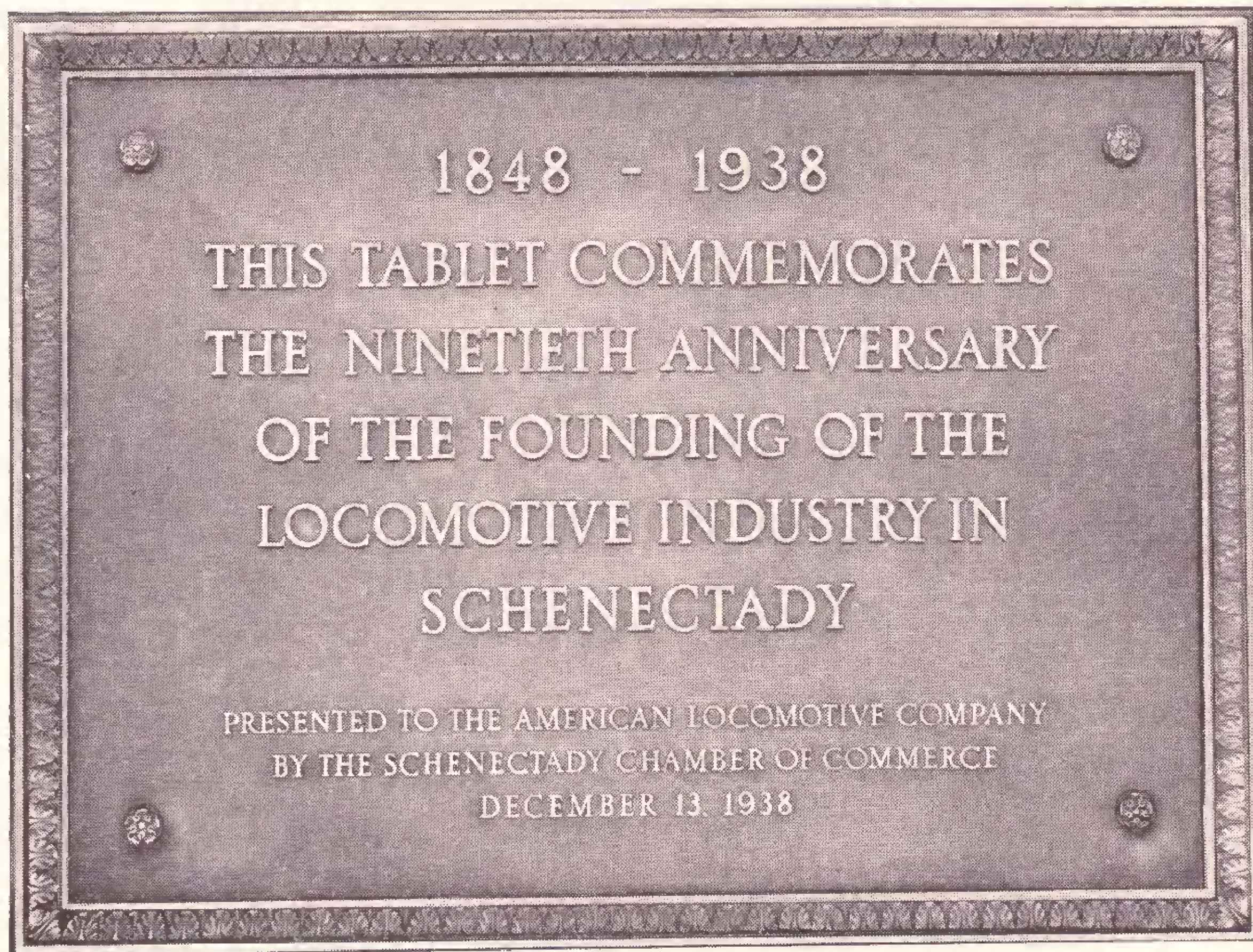
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*The Plaque*



## THE OCCASION

*December thirteenth, nineteen hundred and thirty-eight, was an eventful day in the annals of the American Locomotive Company. The citizens of Schenectady, through their Chamber of Commerce, set this day apart to commemorate the 90th Anniversary of the founding of the locomotive industry in Schenectady.*

*In the afternoon, before a large assemblage gathered in the finishing shop of the Alco plant, Mr. Lawrence G. Wagner, President Schenectady Trust Company and President Schenectady Chamber of Commerce, presented to Mr. William C. Dickerman, President American Locomotive Company, a large, beautiful bronze plaque (illustrated on page 3). A Scotch setting, in honor of the founders, prevailed at the presentation. Miss Lorraine Ellen MacRae, attractively attired in kilts, unveiled the plaque, and Mr. James Copeland, also in Scotch attire, provided bagpipe music.*

*In the evening over 500 Schenectadians and guests attended a dinner, the feature of the Celebration, at the Hotel Van Curler. This dinner was sponsored by the Schenectady Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Lawrence G. Wagner, President of the Chamber, acted as Toastmaster. Honorable Oswald D. Heck, Speaker New York State Assembly, and Honorable Robert W. Baxter, Mayor of Schenectady, both paid tribute to the courageous Schenectady group of men who founded the locomotive industry in this City. Mr. Charles A. Harrell, City Manager Schenectady, presented awards to the successful contestants in the model locomotive contest conducted in connection with the anniversary celebration. First prize was awarded to Mr. Leslie Bowman, and the second prize to Mr. Charles W. Lester. The main address of the evening, delivered by Mr. Mills Ten Eyck, Presi-*



*dent Schenectady Savings Bank and Councilman City of Schenectady, is presented herewith in full.*

*Entertainment features were under the direction of Mr. John R. Sheehan, and included Miss Joyce Wishart, Scotch dancer, accompanied by Piper Robert Dixon; Miss Ruth Filburn, radio vocalist; and a double quartet from the Schubert Club composed of Messrs. Neil O. Sheldon, E. T. Grout, Walter Melber, H. B. Haig, J. A. Chapman, F. M. Alexander, W. K. Boyd, Jr., and E. W. Wiese. Dinner music was furnished by the Rice String Trio.*

*The Invocation was given by the Rev. Gerard R. Gnade, Pastor Second Reformed Church, and the Benediction by the Rev. John J. Finn, Pastor Saint Helen's Church.*

*The Committee of Arrangements representing the Schenectady Chamber of Commerce was composed of Messrs. Carl W. Snyder, General Chairman; Joseph M. Coffey, David T. Coleman, Duane Featherstonhaugh, Charles Fischer, Campbell MacRae, Walter Reagles, John R. Sheehan, Clyde D. Wagoner, and Malcolm J. Wilson, Secretary.*

*As a closing feature of the program, gold emblems were presented to seventeen Alco employees who have had fifty or more years of service in the Schenectady plant.*

*The American Locomotive Company cherishes the esteem and affection of the people of Schenectady so vividly portrayed by this whole eventful day. Such esteem, a factor of prime and constant importance in this ninety years of successful operation, coupled with the historical value of the address by Mr. Mills Ten Eyck, warrants this permanent record. Its wide distribution will allow many Alco friends to share with us the feeling of pride and satisfaction that we brought home with us on the evening of December thirteenth.*



## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

*Mills Ten Eyck was born in Albany, N. Y. After graduating from the Albany High School, he started work as a messenger with the Albany County Bank, Albany, N. Y. His next position was clerk with the National Commercial Bank of Albany, and subsequently he became Assistant Treasurer, Albany County Savings Bank.*

*In 1924 he became Treasurer of the Schenectady Savings Bank; later Vice-President and Treasurer; and at present date is President, Board of Trustees, of this same bank.*

*He is a Past President, Albany Chapter, American Institute of Banking; Former Vice-President, Savings Banks Association, State of New York; Former Member of National Council, National Association of Mutual Savings Banks; President Board of Trustees, Y.M.C.A.; Former Vice-President, New York State Y.M.C.A.; Former Member of National Council, Y.M.C.A.; Past President, Schenectady Chamber of Commerce; President, Board of Trustees, Old Ladies Home of Schenectady; President, Mohawk Club, Schenectady; President, Schenectady Museum Association; Vice-President, Schenectady Chapter, Red Cross; Member of Advisory Board, First Reformed Church, Schenectady; Treasurer, Schenectady Symphony Orchestra; Trustee, Holland Society of New York; Member, Pelham Lodge, F. & A. M.; and a Councilman, City of Schenectady.*

*Mills Ten Eyck is a direct descendant of the Dutch Settlers who colonized and made habitable the Hudson and Mohawk valleys shortly after Hendrick Hudson, in the early 1600's, discovered and explored the Hudson River. The Ten Eyck name is interminably connected with progressive civic activity since the days of the Dutch Settlers. Mills Ten Eyck, an able and active citizen, is today carrying on the tradition of the Ten Eyck name.*





### THE "TWENTIETH CENTURY LIMITED"

*A painting that hangs in the library of the home of Mr. F. E. Williamson, President, New York Central System, and painted by Mr. A. Sheldon Pennoyer.*

### SCHENECTADY'S NONAGENARIAN INDUSTRY

*by MILLS TEN EYCK*

*Mr. Chairman, Honored Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

I HAVE WONDERED why the Committee in charge of the dinner asked me to speak on the occasion of this 90th Anniversary.

Few, if any, here, were present at the birth of this industry in our city. I understand the Committee looked around for the oldest inhabitant of the county and were not too concerned whether that individual knew anything about locomotives. Someone, however, told them



that because I could outsmoke a smokestack, I might qualify.

We have often heard the locomotive industry in the past compared to a feast or a famine. Tonight we are gathered at a feast, and I am sure it may be some time before we sit down to such an enjoyable banquet commemorating another 90 years.

Sometimes a locomotive gets off the track, so you will understand if I depart from my subject that I am on a locomotive which has temporarily gotten off the track.

The Committee was not thoughtful enough to hand me a speech which I could deliver. I have no ghost writer. There seems to be no restriction on what I might have to say, as this is still a land of free speech.

My first interest in locomotives goes back to the time when, as a boy, I sat on a rail fence on my uncle's farm in Niagara County and watched the trains go by. One of the pleasant recollections that will ever remain is the friendly wave which I always received from the engineer in the cab.

From a boy I have had a longing to ride in the cab of a locomotive. But, here I am, the oldest inhabitant, with this ambition still unsatisfied. . . . Mr. Dickerman . . . can't you do something about this?

As we meet here tonight to celebrate the 90th Anniver-



sary of a great industry, our thoughts might well revert to a time 277 years ago when Arendt Van Curler and a small company of fourteen Dutchmen formed this settlement. For 600 hands of wampum, 6 coats of duffel, 30 barrels of lead, 9 bags of powder they later purchased from the Mohawks all the land within four miles north and south of the river from Alplaus Creek to the western limit of the present County of Schenectady. They cut the logs for their homes out of virgin forest. They traded with the Indians. They came here with the purpose of trade. They followed the old Indian trail along the ravine which enters the Mohawk Valley. It is the railroad route today through which the New York Central approaches the city from the east.

Van Curler, the founder, was much respected by both the early settlers and the red men. He builded well. He left a name for honesty and fair-dealing. He was the agent in the colony for Kilian Van Rensselaer, the Dutch Patroon.

As the years passed the settlement grew, changes came, new faces appeared. It may be a fantastic idea, but from time to time I think the mantle of Arendt Van Curler, as leader, has rested upon other men who followed him. I think it rested upon Joseph Yates, first Mayor of Schenectady and afterwards Governor of New



York State. I think it rested upon Eliphalet Nott, President of Union College for sixty-two years. I think it rested upon Edison when he founded the great electrical industry in our city in 1886. I think it rested upon John Ellis who, with Walter McQueen and others, established the locomotive industry in our city on a sound basis.

Ninety years; a story is told of an old man of the village, when asked to explain his great age, said, "If I lives through April, I lives to the end of the year." Many a business today would give no better answer.

Ninety years; and yet today this is not an antiquarian exhibit but ninety years of progress. We would have failed in our duty as citizens had we allowed this anniversary to pass unnoticed. Because of your great age you are a link with the past, your roots have gone down deep in our community. Today you stand as America's oldest existing locomotive plant. You were here before the Civil War. At that time there were no automobiles, no telephones, no airplanes, no electric lights.

In 1848, the year of your birth, Polk was President of the United States; gold was discovered in California; Wisconsin was admitted to the Union. It was the exact date that Queen Victoria first traveled by train from Balmoral Castle to London. The population of Schenectady at that time was only 6,500.



Schenectady was then one of the important railroad centers in America, four railroads converging at this point.

In 1831 the Mohawk and Hudson opened. It was the first steam passenger road in the country. In 1832 the Saratoga-Schenectady road was built. In 1836 Utica and Schenectady Railroad was completed.

In 1843 Troy and Schenectady Railroad was in operation. The Mohawk and Hudson was the nucleus of the New York Central system with its 12,000 miles of line today.

George W. Featherstonhaugh, whose picture has been placed in Schenectady's "Hall of Fame," was the original promoter of this railroad.

It was in 1848, twelve years after the building of the railroad from Schenectady to Utica, that the locomotive industry was established in Schenectady. For just a moment we might turn back the pages of history. As simple as nature, too wonderful for human understanding, the magic of the steam engine is all in a drop of water. Experiments on the lifting power of steam, with his mother's tea kettle, led to the invention of the steam engine by James Watt about the year 1800.

In 1814 George Stephenson built his first locomotive in England. Why not use steam instead of horses to draw



trucks, he thought. Improving Watt's engine, he built in 1825 his first locomotive to draw goods and passengers.

Here, in America, Peter Cooper built the first steam locomotive in the United States in 1829. The first locomotive on rails traveled at a speed of five miles per hour. George Stephenson's "Locomotion" traveled 16 miles per hour.

The locomotive of today is the result of slow accumulation of improvements made by different inventors.

George Westinghouse invented the air brake in Schenectady in 1869.

The coming of the steam engine altered the whole aspect of human life, the whole course of civilization.

Railroad locomotives, indispensable in time of peace, are even more indispensable in time of war, and there is no better way of recovery from our present depression than the building of locomotives with all that it signifies and entails. I have read that of approximately 45,000 locomotives in use today, two-thirds are over twenty years old. It is interesting also to note that many an accident on the railroad is an advantage and leads to improvements. What is needed today is an accident to some of our politicians.

It was perhaps natural, with four railroads centering



in Schenectady, that the citizens should consider the possibilities of building a plant to construct locomotives. A meeting was called. It was attended by the leading citizens of that time, mostly Mohawk Dutch. While most of those present were in favor, a prominent lawyer present was opposed. Addressing the meeting he said, "Gentlemen, before you close this proposition, I beg of you to give this matter further consideration. It appears to me we are all being carried away with our enthusiasm and are rushing headlong into this proposition without sufficient consideration. I want to ask you a question. What will we do with this proposed plant when the locomotives are all built?" (That was in 1848.) In spite of his objection, the plan met with general approval. \$40,000 was raised by popular subscription. A large sum in those days. \$1,000 for the land, \$17,000 for the tools and \$22,000 for buildings.

The Norris Brothers of Pennsylvania, who had been engaged in building locomotives in Philadelphia, had agreed to operate the plant and supply approximately \$10,000 for tools and machinery. One locomotive was built in 1849 for the Utica and Schenectady Railroad. The Company was not successful. The Norris Brothers went back to Philadelphia. For about one year the plant lay idle.



In 1851 the Schenectady Locomotive Engine Manufacturing Company, as it was called, was sold to a group headed by John Ellis for half of the original cost of the property. The name was changed to the Schenectady Locomotive Works with John Ellis as President. From that day, until its merger with seven other plants to form the American Locomotive Company in 1901, there was an Ellis at the head of the Schenectady Locomotive Works.

Mr. Ellis had four sons, each of whom served during this fifty-year period as President of the Company. The capital was increased and for years the works was familiarly known as the "Big Shop."

The history of the Schenectady Locomotive Works is bound up in the lives of the men who directed its affairs. The names of Ellis, McQueen, Pitkin, are indelibly written in the records of the Schenectady Locomotive Works.

McQueen, who was a master mechanic and superintendent, established a reputation for "good, reliable machines, no freak designs, no crazy styles, or noble experiments." Under McQueen the output increased from 5 locomotives in 1851 to 110 in 1873.

When Mr. Pitkin became General Manager and Vice President in 1901, at the time of the merger, the output had increased to 40 locomotives per month, and the men



who succeeded them, whom we here know, McNaughton, Reid, Magarvey, McColl, Allison, Blunt, Yorkston, White, and the unnamed men in the shops still maintain the same high standards and put into your product something greater than mere steel and materials.

The first locomotives built in this country are remembered by their names. The first locomotive in the United States was built in 1829 for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad by Peter Cooper and was called the "Tom Thumb." It was no larger than the hand car used on the track today. Its upright boiler was no larger than the ordinary boiler attached to a household coal range. It had a speed of fifteen miles per hour. It made the first journey by steam in the United States.

The owners of the stage coaches at that time were very jealous of this new competitor of transportation, so they challenged the owners of the rails to a race between the "Tom Thumb" and the horse-drawn car. It is interesting to recall that this race was won by the horse-drawn car because of engine trouble.

The first locomotive built in Schenectady by the Norris brothers was called "Lightning." It had a length over-all of 29 feet and could haul about nine of our present day fifty-ton steel coal cars loaded.



Some of you will remember the "Flying Dutchman" of the Long Island Railroad. For a long period this custom of naming locomotives seems to have been discarded. With the coming of the streamline trains the idea has been revived. We find the D. & H. with the "Horatio Allen," named after their first engineer. The C. B. & Q. with its "Zephyr"; the Union Pacific with the "City of Portland"; and the Milwaukee with its "Hiawatha," built by the American Locomotive Company here in Schenectady.

Also, built here in Schenectady, we have the present streamlined New York Central Hudson type, with its over 1500 H.P. per driving axle, without doubt one of the most efficient motive power units on the rails today. This locomotive hauls the new, luxurious, and world-famed "Twentieth Century Limited."

I think the dependability of railroad time by which we have come to set our watches is due to the dependability of the locomotives which you build.

It must bring a thrill of achievement to know that the railroads of the entire world are using your locomotives. It is a tribute to the worth and integrity of your product.

We are proud and share with you the knowledge that the locomotives built in Schenectady by the American



Locomotive Company carry the name of our city to distant corners of the earth:

Russia, China, Japan, The Philippines in the east;  
The Argentine, Brazil, Venezuela and the countries of  
South America;

England, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Belgium,  
Greece, Serbia, Finland, in Europe;

Colombia, Panama, Mexico, Guatemala, Canal Zone  
to the south;

Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaiian Islands;

Canada, Newfoundland to the north;

Trinidad, Egypt, Nigeria, Africa, and South Africa.

You recall the story of the railroad official, when asked what part of the country his railroad traversed, said: "It runs through the western and southwestern area but its lines are now being extended into an unknown country." When asked what he meant by this statement, he said, "The financial condition of the road is such that I believe it is going to hell."

I was interested also to know that the locomotive on the cog railway which ascends Mt. Washington is your product.

Truly it can be said, based on these records, that Schenectady *hauls* and lights the world.

It was indirectly due to a misunderstanding between



those interested in building locomotives in Schenectady that Edison came here in 1886 and bought the shops which had been built, although not fully completed, for what was to have been a rival locomotive plant.

Like the automobile industry, the locomotive industry has seen a great many manufacturers come and go. Today your only competitors are the Baldwin and Lima.

I wrote down a copy of an advertisement which appeared in 1878. It interested me because of its quaint wording. It reads:

“The Schenectady Locomotive Works continues to receive orders and to furnish with promptness the best and latest improved coal and wood burning locomotive engines for broad or narrow gauge railroads and other railroad machinery, tires, etc., etc., and also repair and rebuild locomotives; possess facilities for forwarding work to any part of the country.”

During the Civil War period the Locomotive Works was taken over by the Government. The contracts which the plant had at that time were cancelled. All locomotives built were for Government use. The output in 1861 was thirteen engines, in 1862—29 engines, and 1863—41 engines.



On the night of June 26, 1866, a disastrous fire consumed most of the main building of the plant. It was immediately rebuilt and considerably enlarged.

One morning in 1860 Mr. Ellis went through his shops highly elated, swinging his arms in the air, exclaiming: "Men, men, one year's work ahead of us, ten locomotives have been ordered by a western road." It is almost unbelievable that a similar order today would last about three days if the plant were in full operation.

Railroads and locomotives were not always looked upon with favor. I have here a copy of the minutes taken from a meeting of the Board of Education of Lancaster, Ohio, about the year 1831. The Board had been asked for the use of the school house for a debate on the practicability of the railroad. The minutes read:

"You are welcome to use the school room to debate all proper questions in but such things as railroads and telegraphs are impossibilities and rank infidelity. There is nothing in the word of God about them. If God had designed that His intelligent creatures should travel at the frightful speed of fifteen miles an hour by steam, He would have foretold it through His holy prophets. It is a device of Satan to lead immortal souls down to hell."

When I think of the cost and the speed of the weight



and the power and the use of your product, I realize that you do things in a big way.

Your plant covers over 61 acres in our city. I am informed that the larger type locomotive costs approximately \$200,000. You have kept pace in this era of speed with the automobile and the airplane and have increased the speed of your locomotives from 15 miles per hour to over 120 miles per hour. Your locomotives have grown in size from perhaps four tons to several hundred tons in weight.

I have been told that one large freight locomotive on the Erie has hauled 250 loaded cars, a train approximately  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles in length and that to bring one of the large locomotives to a stop when traveling under full speed at 120 miles per hour it would require almost a mile or five thousand feet.

There are many things I can say.

Schenectady has been a settlement for almost 300 years, a city since 1798 or 140 years, and for 90 years of this long period you have been a going, growing concern in our community.

Your prosperity has been our prosperity, your depressions have been our depressions. When the "Big Shop" is busy, business in the community is usually good. You have survived many panics. After the disastrous fire you



rebuilt and have continued to enlarge your plant over the years. You have survived government operation, you have met changing conditions, improving your product, keeping pace with progress and competition in an age which demands speed.

You have contributed generously to all our projects of a civic nature.

Other industries have come and gone. The tanning industry, a brick yard, Westinghouse Agricultural Works, wiring manufacturing, muslin underwear, brooms and brushes, the Jones car works manufacturing street cars, the Cluett Foundry manufacturing marine engines and boilers. Of these once great industries in our city, you remain.

What you have meant in the industrial growth of our city is difficult to put into words. Your many employees have built their homes here. Your payrolls which have run into the millions have been expended largely in our community. You have brought fame to our city throughout the world, wherever your products have been used.

And so, tonight, as we celebrate this 90th Anniversary with you, we congratulate you, we thank you, we wish you many years of continued prosperity and we express to you an appreciation from our hearts greater than mere words.



## FIFTY YEAR VETERANS

*As the last act of a memorable day, Mr. Dickerman presented 17 employees of the Schenectady Plant with 50 years service emblems. In his presentation talk, Mr. Dickerman said:*

*"It is a very pleasant duty that I now have to perform. We have talked much about our ninety years here in Schenectady. We have heard of the miraculous progress made in these years, and of the simultaneous development that has taken place in the locomotive.*

*"We have with us tonight 17 men who have seen, with their very eyes, much of this change take place. Seventeen men who have seen 50 or more years service in this Schenectady Plant.*

*"It has been a wonderful privilege to have played an important part in this drama of the locomotive. But possibly even above all that, are the friendships made and remembered—friendships that will always be with them.*

*"It seems fitting that as the last act of a memorable day, and in this same spirit of fellowship, that these men should now be presented with their emblem commemorating 50 years of Service. May this token always be a remembrance of the admiration and affection of the Company, and also of their fellow workmen with whom they have been so long associated."*

*The following list names the 17 Schenectady plant employees who received the 50 years service emblems:*

EDWARD CROUCH . . . . .	52 Years Service
DAVID DUCK . . . . .	53 Years Service
ANDREW FOWLER . . . . .	54 Years Service
THOMAS F. GOGGINS . . . . .	57 Years Service
NICHOLAS LEUKANICS . . . . .	51 Years Service
FRANCIS E. MARTIN . . . . .	53 Years Service
JAMES NOLAN . . . . .	54 Years Service
JAMES H. ORCHARD . . . . .	50 Years Service
ALFRED H. PAIGE . . . . .	51 Years Service
WILLIAM RIEGER . . . . .	50 Years Service
JOHN RODENMACHER . . . . .	51 Years Service
CHRISTIAN ROST . . . . .	56 Years Service
JESSE SAUERS . . . . .	53 Years Service
WILLIAM SEMPLE . . . . .	50 Years Service
FRANCIS J. SMITH . . . . .	51 Years Service
THOMAS TAYLOR . . . . .	52 Years Service
WILLIAM YORKSTON . . . . .	50 Years Service



# THE ALCO SONG

By EVERETT T. GROUT

We've been working for the railroads,  
Many and many a day.  
We've been building locomotives,  
To haul your freight away.  
From the donkey to the Diesel,  
Brother, sure's you're born,  
That's why all the celebration,  
Why we blow our horn.

You can read your ancient hist'ry  
From the dawn of man;  
You won't find an engine builder  
Ever worth a damn,  
'Til you get down to the forties  
Ninety years ago  
That's the time John Ellis started  
With the old ALCO.

History is full of wise guys,  
Guys who "told you so."  
Caesar hiked from Rome to London,  
All the way in "Low."  
When his legions hit old England  
Julius heaved a sigh—  
"If I'd had an ALCO engine  
We'd have come in 'High!' "

When young Christopher Columbus  
Sailed the briny deep,  
He had lots of wind and hot-air,  
Power was mighty cheap.  
Ferdinand called Chris a dumb-bell  
When he told his scheme.  
They'd have done a tourist business  
If they'd had some "Steam."

Old Abe Lincoln built a "rail"-road  
Out in Ohio.  
Through the swamps and over mountains,  
Jus' so his folks could go.  
Old Abe had a lot of trouble,  
Made him kind of sour,  
But he landed in the White House  
'Cause he had the "Power."

Now we have our rapid transit,  
Everything we need.  
Stream-lined cars and stream-lined engines,  
Built for top-notch speed.  
When we die and go to Glory,  
On Resurrection Morn,  
When Old Gabriel blows his trumpet—  
ALCO, BLOW YOUR HORN!

TUNE: *We've Been Working on the Railroad*



